

## **Sociocultural themes: Social relations**

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### **Introduction**

The numbers in square brackets refer to the categories in the Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM). Two digits with an asterisk refer to a broad category. A third digit refers to a more specific topic within the two-digit category.

### **In this module group**

Here are the modules on sociocultural themes of social relations:

- Questions on sociocultural themes: Family and kinship[59\*,60\*,61\*]
- Questions on sociocultural themes: Marriage [58\*]
- Questions on sociocultural themes: Local government [62\*]
- Questions on sociocultural themes: Social stratification [56\*]
- Questions on sociocultural themes: Friendship [572]
- Questions on sociocultural themes: Visiting and hospitality [574]
- Questions on sociocultural themes: Gift exchanges [431]
- Questions on sociocultural themes: Buying and selling [43\*]
- Questions on sociocultural themes: Religious institutions [79\*]

### **See also**

- Keywords: Outline of Cultural Materials (OCM), culture learning, interacting with people

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## **Questions on sociocultural themes: Family and kinship[59\*,60\*,61\*]**

### **Questions**

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of families and kinship:

1. Is land owned by a family or by individuals?
2. Who lives together in the same household?
3. What are the terms of address to refer to different members of the family?
4. What are the special obligations, responsibilities, or privileges that go with the different relationship pairs (father-son, or brother-younger brother)?
5. How are different households related to each other? Do kinfolk live near each other?
6. Who takes care of orphans?
7. What responsibilities do relatives have to each other? Are they expected to lend money or goods to each other or take in and raise children who are related to them?
8. Who is considered head of the household? How is the head of the household chosen?
9. Are there relatives one should avoid or not talk to?
10. What relationships are usual with in-laws?
11. Are there restrictions against marrying relatives, or are some relatives considered desirable marriage partners?

## Sources

Some of these questions are adapted from Purnell 1993.

## See also

- Keywords: kinship systems

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## Questions on sociocultural themes: Marriage [58\*]

### Questions

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of marriage:

1. What is the basis for marriage in this society? What makes a desirable marriage partner? When do boys and girls reach a marriageable age?
2. How does courtship take place? Who initiates courtship?
3. Who arranges for a marriage? Does some sort of payment take place (a bride price or a dowry)? How are marriages arranged? Is there a betrothal ceremony?
4. What kinds of marriages are recognized by the society?

5. Is polygamy permitted in the society? Is polygamy common? What are relations like in a polygamous household?
6. What preparations are made for a wedding?
7. What takes place at a marriage ceremony? Who presides over the ceremony? What other significant roles are there at a ceremony? Who is invited to the ceremony?
8. How do the different participants dress at a wedding? Are gifts customary? What gifts are appropriate?
9. Where does a newly married couple live? What adjustment problems are there for a newly married couple?
10. What is the basis on which a marriage can be terminated? How do people in the society feel about terminated marriages? Are terminated marriages common?

## Sources

Some of this material is adapted from Purnell 1993

## See also

- Keywords: ceremony, courtship, marriage, polygamy

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## Questions on sociocultural themes: Local government [62\*]

### Questions

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of local government:

1. How is the city, town, or village in which you live administered? What are the positions of authority? What are the qualifications for authority?
2. How are leaders chosen? How much authority do the leaders have, and in what areas do they have authority?
3. Is there a local council or group of advisers that relate to the leader? How are these people chosen? How much influence do they have over the leaders?
4. How do they arrive at major decisions arrived? Is there opportunity for disagreement or debate? Does everyone at the meeting have a voice? Who makes the final decision? How is the decision made known to the people of the community?
5. Do women or young people have a voice in making decisions?
6. What are the external and internal forces of control? What is the relationship of the

community with the external control system?

### **Sources**

Some of this material is adapted from Purnell 1993.

### **See also**

- Keywords: governments (political)

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## **Questions on sociocultural themes: Social stratification [56\*]**

### **Questions**

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of social stratification:

1. What the age groups recognized by society? What status do older people have compared to younger people? At what age do people have most influence in the society?
2. What is the status of men and women?
3. Are people of some ethnic groups accorded higher status than those of other ethnic groups?
4. What social classes or castes are recognized by the society? On what basis does someone belong to a social class? Are people born into a certain class? Can people move from one class to another during their lifetime? On what basis can they move to a different class?
5. Who has particular prestige in the community? What is the basis for this prestige?
6. What objects are status symbols in the society? Have these status symbols changed over time?

### **Sources**

Some of this material is adapted from Purnell 1993.

### **See also**

- Keywords: social stratification

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## Questions on sociocultural themes: Friendship [572]

### Questions

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of friendship:

1. What is the basis for friendship in the society? Do people restrict friendship to people of the same age group and sex?
2. What kinds of things do friends do together? What are the obligations and privileges of friendship?
3. How do you show someone you would like to be a friend? Who initiates a friendship?
4. Are there special groups of friends or cliques in the community?

### Sources

Some of this material is adapted from Purnell 1993.

### See also

- Keywords: friendships

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## Questions on sociocultural themes: Visiting and hospitality [574]

### Questions

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of visiting and hospitality:

1. What patterns of visiting do you observe? When do people usually visit each other?
2. How do people travel to visit each other?
3. What people tend to visit each other? Are they family members, neighbors, friends, or fellow-workers?
4. How often do people visit each other? How long do people stay for a visit?
5. What hospitality is shown to visitors? Are there differences, depending on whether the person is a close friend, a relative, or a stranger?
6. What words of welcome are said? Is there a standard formulaic greeting?

7. Is food or drink offered during a visit and if so, when?
8. What topics are discussed? Who initiates the conversation; men or women, old or young, or visitor or host?
9. What do children do during a visit?
10. Where do people receive visitors? What room of the house is used for visitors, or is it outside the house?
11. How long does a visit typically last? How does a host indicate to a visitor that it is time to leave, or does the visitor initiate the leaving procedure?

### **See also**

See the following for a related activity:

- Keywords: social visiting

The Social Visiting activity

### **Sources**

Some of this material is adapted from Purnell 1993.

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## **Questions on sociocultural themes: Gift exchanges [431]**

### **Questions**

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of gift exchanges:

1. What are the rules of etiquette for giving and receiving gifts? To whom would a person give a gift?
2. On what occasions would a gift typically be given? What things are considered appropriate gifts?
3. What is the motivation for giving a gift?
4. What sort of reciprocity is expected? What would be given in return or exchange?
5. Would you be expected to give a gift when visiting someone's house or when someone visits your house? What sort of gift would be appropriate?
6. Would a gift be wrapped? If wrapped, when is it opened?
7. In what ways is gift-giving associated with status? Do you give different gifts to

- people of higher or lower status?
8. What expectations are raised in the recipient if you give a gift or in the giver if you accept a gift?

## Sources

Some of this material is adapted from Purnell 1993.

## See also

- Keywords: gift exchanges

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## Questions on sociocultural themes: Buying and selling [43\*]

### Questions

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of buying and selling:

1. What items are offered for sale in the community?
2. Where do you go to buy and sell different items? Are there special shops for different items? Is there a local market? What days does a market operate?
3. What sort of monetary system is used? Is payment sometimes given in kind for products or services?
4. Is there a barter system? What are the rules or principles for bartering? What items have a fixed price and for what items can you negotiate a price?
5. What is the script for a typical buying-selling exchange? (Choose a particular type of commodity.)
6. Do traders come to houses to sell wares or do people always go to a market or shop?
7. Is there a credit system? On what basis is credit extended? What happens if debts cannot be paid?

### See also

See the following for a related activity:

- Keywords: buying and selling

The Shopping Trip activity

## Sources

Some of this material is adapted from Purnell 1993.

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## Questions on sociocultural themes: Religious institutions [79\*]

### Questions

Here are some questions to investigate in connection with the theme of religious institutions:

1. What religious institutions exist in the community?
2. What religious practitioners are there (holy men or women, priests, seers, or magicians)? Who are the practitioners and what do they do? Are they paid for their services and if so, how?
3. Are there special places where religious services are held? Are they considered holy places?
4. Do they hold regular religious services? What goes on at such a service? Who attends?
5. What is the typical script for a religious service? How much variation is there in the script?
6. Are there special religious ceremonies for special occasions and if so, what sort of occasions? What is the yearly round of religious activities?
7. Are there religious sects? Who belongs to the sect? What beliefs are the sects based on? Does membership in a religious sect correspond with membership in other kinds of groups or identities?

### See also

See the following for a related topic:

- Keywords: ceremony, religion

Religious beliefs

## Sources

Some of this material is adapted from Purnell 1993.